

Nineteen by eliask

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Summary: Kali returns with a message. El doesn't react the way she expects.

Nineteen

Hopper was looking forward to a quiet night at home. Instead he stops cold. "The hell is this."

El is on the couch where he had left her, dressed in flannels and overalls. Next to her is a young woman with black, purple-highlighted hair, clad in a leather jacket and high boots.

El takes a deep breath. "This is my sister."

Hopper's a cop. He's seen a lot, heard a lot. He lost his daughter when she was seven-years-old. He's fought monsters, human and otherwise. He held El after she closed the gate. This he doesn't expect. "Sister?"

The sister in question looks Hopper up and down. Appraising. "And this is your policeman. I am Kali."

Hopper's gaze flits between the two of them. "This is the one that dressed you up like an MTV punk." It's not a question. He'd figured, after she saw Mama, and she left – he doesn't know what he figured. "She looks like one, too."

This sister looks surprised. As surprised as one can look in that dark makeup. "You didn't tell him?" She asks El.

El shakes her head. The truth is that he never asked. He justifies: she hadn't wanted to tell him. Her story was that a "a nice man in a big truck" had taken her to Mama's. After that...after that, he hadn't wanted to know. The most important thing – then, now - was that she was safe.

Eyes on Hopper, Kali pulls down her sleeve. 008. "I was Eight. Jane and I grew up together."

008. 011. Now the sister comments make sense. How many of these kids are there? And suddenly, Hopper wants to crush the facility, burn it to the ground, all over again.

Hopper breathes out noisily. "How old are you?"

"I am seventeen."

He is filled a dull sense of fear. "You can do what she does?" His El is powerful, yes, dangerous, lethal, certainly. But that isn't who *she* is. Her powers a part of her, but they are not *her*. She is more than that. She was trained to be someone else's weapon, but she's rejected that life. She's chosen Hawkins instead. This Kali sits next to his daughter protectively, possessively, derisively, like she is her true older sister. They don't look alike, but they both have that wildness, that sense of being slightly feral. And they look like they belong to each other. Out of the two, Kali is indisputably more controlled. Kali isn't someone else's weapon, he realizes. She is a weapon of her own fashioning. And that is frightening.

A person is a person, not a weapon.

Two possibilities of El's futures lie in front of them. At home, in Hawkins, a daughter, a friend, a student. Or something else entirely – an assassin? What is Kali, anyway?

Kali shakes her head, and Hopper is washed with mild relief. Kali is watching him, and he starts to react defensively. And then he is distracted by the rain. Logic tells him that the rain doesn't make sense. He is in a cabin. It has rained before without leaks. When he came in, it was dry outside. And now it is pouring inside, cold. He feels it wet, icy, drip, dripping on his skin. He stares at Kali and El, drenched as he is, hair plastered to their skin. And then it is gone. They are as dry and warm again as they were a moment ago.

"No," Kali explains. "Jane can find people, and move real objects. What I can do is not real. I can make you see illusions. Or hide people, in my own way. I can make you invisible to others." She looks between the two of them. "I had to come because of Dr. Brenner. He is alive, Jane. I have seen it."

"No," Hopper and El say at once. It's not true. They were at the school, too. Kali wasn't.

She raises her head up high. "He is." He watches her eyes. He's been trained in interrogation techniques. He has a good sense of people. She doesn't seem like she's lying.

El speaks. Despite everything, her speech is still too rare. "I saw him die. But even if he's not..." El struggles for a moment. "He is the past. And I - I have to move forward."

Kali's lip curls. "Backwards. With your policemen."

El pauses. Shakes her head. "Forwards. With my friends."

Kali is quiet for a moment. "I will always love you. But we do not agree. Even on something so fundamental."

"Stay." El holds on to one of Kali's hands.

"Why?"

"I want to introduce my friends to my sister."

Kali laughs. Bitterly. Affectionately. "You are serious?"

The look on El's face is deadly serious. "Yes."

Kali tilts her head. "I will meet your friends. And then I will leave."

"For now. You'll come back." El's voice is confident. "Or I'll find you. You're apart of this, Kali." She takes a deep breath. "You are more than your past."

"Jane," Kali says.

"My name is Jane Hopper," El corrects. "Call me El."

Irritation flickers across Kali's face for the first time. "When we met, you told me your name was Jane. Jane Ives. Why do you go by this now? Does it not remind you of the lab?"

"It's the name my friends know me as. The name they gave me." El's gaze is level.

"Your friends, your friends!'" Kali scoffs. She leans in closer. "And what about you? Who are you, Jane Ives? Jane Hopper? El? Eleven? Who are you really?"

"I don't know," El admits. "But whoever I am, I won't find it with

Brenner." Her voice is stronger now. "You said *your* friends are your family now. It's not the same for me. I have Mama. I have my aunt. And now I have Hopper. But I know this. This is my home."

Kali stares at her. "Then *I* will find Brenner. And I will make him suffer."

"Goodbye, Kali. I love you." El's eyes glitter with tears.

For a moment, Hopper thinks Kali will attack El. Then they are embracing, clutching at each other. Then it's over. Kali stands up, salutes Hopper, and she leaves.

The cabin is silent.

For once, it's El who's feeling talkative. She stares at him seriously. "She's stuck. She thinks killing these people will help her move forward but it just drives her deeper into the past. She'll come back. She will. Because she's my sister."

Hopper finds his voice. "I'm proud of you, kid. You know that?"

She half-smiles. "I know."